

March 30th, 2009

TO: RAVALLI COUNTY COMMISSIONERS;

Improved separation for safety and noise, faster response and suppression on wild land fires and continued safe timely medical emergency transportation are some of the reasons why the Environmental Assessment Alternative # 4 for the Ravalli County Airport make the most sense. Relocating the runway north and east allows for the old runway to serve as a taxiway upon relocation and the airport remains open during construction. The increase of approximately 139 acres of open land will act as a noise buffer and allow for future hangar space, which increase the County tax base. Money already collected by the FAA through fuel and ticket taxes from aviation is waiting to fund alternative # 4 at a rate of 95%. The remaining 2.5 % would be paid by Montana State Aeronautics aircraft fuel taxes, and 2.5 % a local match, on alternative # 4. This means no cost to the Ravalli County taxpayers. Included in this alternative is the second phase of 16 years of maintenance, worth millions of dollars and jobs. Do nothing; lose the funding and 100 % of airport maintenance falls to Ravalli County taxpayers. Other alternatives will either close the airport during construction, and at the same runway cost as # 4, or will not be FAA funded.

Some 80 years ago on the 21st of March 1929, County Commissioners voted to give a man FREE use of the County Airport for five years and allowed him to build two hangars and sell fuel. The reason for this action and help was to allow the fledgling town to promote itself around the northwest and across the entire United States as being modern and with an airport. The small town; Missoula, and the man; Bob Johnson. This happened long ago with County Commissioners recognizing the value that a modern airport adds to the economy. I hope the Ravalli County Commissioners see the value a well-kept airport adds to our economy and that closing it for even one summer would not be good, especially in the current economic time.

What about the companies that depend and need the airport to remain open? Fire suppression by air would have to be carried out from Missoula, another 45 minutes each direction, and timely emergency transportation by plane would be unavailable to Ravalli County residents, other than out of Missoula, some hour away.

It seems to me, if the Commissioners can't see these facts clear enough to make the right decision "YES ON ALTERNATIVE 4." Then it makes me wonder how could you ever make a good decision, when the subject is hard to understand and there is not a clear and good solution as there is in this issue.

